

The Dardanelles.



STORY OF THE ATTACK

TOLD BY

GUNNER SIDNEY PRIOR

OF THE

1st A.I.E. FORCE.

Proceeds of the Sale of this Pamphlet
will be given to the ~~Wounded~~
~~Nurse~~ ~~Soldiers'~~ Fund.

JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY
— BRISBANE —

Sunday, May 9th.

off GABA TEPE

We are still aboard the ship; (1) the fighting being confined to such a small area of land the majority of horses are not needed till they advance more inland; (2) at this part the position gained is being held until the other landing party (29th Division British Troops), who landed at Cape Helles join up with us, which is expected at any time. The advance will then proceed, and our objective (Maidos) be attacked. Some may think we are safe aboard, but no, far from it; we are in a position here practically helpless as far as every man is concerned; we cannot retaliate; but the warships do more than our share. We have been threatened with floating mines, two narrow escapes being had. We have been shelled every day by inland batteries of howitzers, and have had bombs dropped in amongst us from aeroplanes, having had three visits already. With all their shells they have only recorded one hit, and that was a collier, injuring two men, and doing a bit of damage. But the shell was almost spent, otherwise it would have been more effective. These "coal boxes" they send are not too nice, I tell you. The noise they make coming is enough—never mind the rest. Well, I will tell you all about these as I proceed. You see there is a reason for everything, so we must not complain, but wait; the General knows what he is about. On Saturday 24th April, as we all lay in Lemnos Harbour things began to show signs of a move. Early in the morning one or two transports left, followed at intervals of about an hour by more, and so on, all leaving very quietly; all possible hopes of creating a stir being hidden. 2 p.m. our turn came, we steamed out and made round to the North of Lemnos and anchored at 6 p.m. in a quiet cove along with nine other

ships. The remainder of the fleet were likewise anchored elsewhere. Everything and everybody were now fully prepared and ready for what might come. Orders re landing, etc., were read out, and also a very special message from our Commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton:—

General Headquarters,
21st April, 1915.

Soldiers of France and of the King,

Before us lies an adventure unprecedented in modern warfare. Together with our comrades of the Fleet we are about to force a landing upon an open beach in face of positions which have been vaunted by our enemies as impregnable. The landing will be made good by the help of God and the Navy. The positions will be stormed and the War brought one step nearer to a glorious close. Remember, said Lord Kitchener when bidding adieu to your Commander, Remember, once you set foot upon the Gallipoli Peninsula, you must fight the thing through to a finish. The whole world will be watching our progress. Let us prove ourselves worthy of the great feat of arms entrusted to us.

IAN HAMILTON, General.

This alone speaks for itself, any more words cannot explain it better. Well, the day came to a close, and in the twilight of the evening many heads were turned towards home and loved ones. Just as night was falling we beheld a sight which put undoubted courage to many hearts, for away out to sea on the sky line we viewed the fleet steaming silently in line towards the foe. And then those of us who could sleep rolled into our blankets. But I could not sleep; why, I do not know. At 12 midnight we up anchored and steamed out to sea followed by the other ships. All lights being out, the feeling it gave one to see such a sight was weird. The night was fine and the stars shone out brightly. At 4 a.m. land was just visible ahead, it being very dark then, as it is always an hour or so before dawn. We continued to approach the land, and as we watched we became aware that we were nearing the scene of operations. Just on the tick of 4.15 a.m. as I looked at my watch, a vivid flash shone out, followed by a tremendous bang, and the rumbling boom and then the burst of the shell; all was over in a flash. This was the opening shot. Scarcely had this

ceased than at another point flash after flash pierced the darkness, followed by the bang; then at other points the same occurred, as quickly as they started so did they increase. Within a few minutes the air was rent with one continued roar and thunder of big guns, with a flash after flash lighting the surroundings. The burst of the shells was beautiful to watch. It was for all the world like the big fireworks display at the Crystal Palace. And so it got from a roar till it was deafening. We were at this time about three miles off land. Having joined in amongst the fleet of troopships, in the darkness we could not see what was actually going on only the firing of the men of war.

At 5.40 a.m., just as the first rays of daylight commenced to show up behind the hill in front of us, heavy rifle fire could be heard on shore. Our troops were just commencing their task so long looked forward to. As the minutes passed, the heavy firing of machine guns and thousands of rifles doing their work continued, with the still increasing fire of the warships and destroyers covering the troops; and so did the Battle of Gaba Tepe commence. At 5.55 a.m., it being almost light, we could now see more plainly what was actually going on. 5.58 a.m. the sun rose above the summit of Gaba Tepe and showed us all war in its highest form. Just at this moment, when the fighting was at its height, the (Good Lizzie), H.M.S. Queen Elizabeth came up from our rear and moved in to the shore and surveyed the operations. The silent way and her magnificent appearance, with her mighty guns gave the impression to me of a Mother hen viewing her chicks busy at work. With the proud and fond look of a Mother, she turned and steamed around to Cape Helles, and was lost to our view, for at that point terrible firing was in progress. We could just see the flashes and hear the reports; but were too much engaged in our own position to watch that way.

Well, the plan of attack was good to look upon. There before us was the impregnable country, a more rough and treacherous piece of land could not be found. One mass of little ridges and thick undergrowth affording plenty of cover for troops in hiding. Enemy guns were everywhere, but our lads in navy blue were a good match for them. Their shooting is simply marvellous. Every shell was fired with effect. The destroyers lay in as near the shore as possible, covering our troops landing with their guns; then out from them were men-o'-war

spaced along at intervals covering the destroyers and blazing away at the enemy's positions and guns, silencing all that were near the shore in a very short time. Behind them lay the transports, some 50 in all, as close in as possible. Then at our rear lay the H.M.S. Haniot, with her frail cargo high up in the sky doing its valuable work observing. Near was the famous Ark Royal, just launching her first seaplane, which rose and got to work very quickly. The day was splendid, the sea as calm as a mill pond, and it was Sunday. Everything so far of importance has happened on a Sunday. So to us all everything seemed in our favour. Just picture to yourself the scene around us, dodging in and out amongst the vessels were small craft of all kinds, mine sweepers, tugs, launches, destroyers and rowing boats galore, all hurrying towards land with their loads of troops and ammunition. Hardly had the troops landed than the boats commenced to bring wounded back, so fierce was the fighting. The first landing party were the 3rd Brigade Infantry, 4000 men; the 9th (Queenslanders) took the left, and the 11th the right. But in the darkness, in landing all got mixed up. The destroyers, loaded up with troops and with ships boats alongside, towing a few in each, dashed into land and commenced to land their troops. So sudden was the attack and terrible the fire that a few lives were lost before a landing was made. One boat turned turtle with ten or a dozen soldiers in, all of whom were drowned. As they jumped out of their boats many were shot, some in the boats and some in the water. Up to their waists in water they waded ashore and flinging off their packs our boys fixed bayonets and into them. The Turk won't stand a bayonet at any price, and they turned and ran. Up went our boys; spirits were high and their blood was up as they chased them up this hill. A terrible steep hill about 1000 feet high. It was a heavy task, many did not reach the top. The hill was taken in about five hours; but our boys would not stop but carried on. But this proved a bad move, as many admit, for their numbers were few and reinforcements had not had time to catch up, and ammunition was far behind. All of the fighting having been done with the bayonet, they chased them inland for a bit; but had to retreat to the summit, and there entrenched themselves. Thus was a task achieved in half a day, that Lord Kitchener said would take a week or a fortnight. We viewed all this fighting as we stood off and through our glasses one could see our boys hard at it. That will give you an idea how the landing was effected. While all this was going on

many things were happening around us. The engineers aboard had launched overboard a landing stage they had built, and were towed ashore by a mine sweeper under a heavy rain of shrapnel. The warships in action on our front from left to right were Majestic, Bacchante, London, Queen, Prince of Wales, and Triumph—that marvellous ship which has braved 17 engagements, and this her 18th. She did deadly work pouring in broadside after broadside, silencing many batteries of guns ;she was right in the centre of the position, and many times we thought she was hit; so she was, but not badly. There were some six or seven destroyers all doing their part.

There are many incidents I would like to relate, but time and space will not permit. At 9.45 a.m. we were ordered closer in to launch another landing stage. Hardly had we done so when a rain of large shells—"coal boxes"—fell in succession around A18, just ahead of us, we being just clear. My heart was in my mouth at every whizz and then the sizz of the shell striking the water. For, as every one came we thought the next would hit us, but no, all moved out of range very quickly without a scratch. This was our first taste of being under fire, and the feeling it gives one is not at all nice. All the same everyone thought it great fun, laughing and joking all the time. The effect of a shell (11 inch they were), hitting the water is a fine sight. They throw up a spray a good few feet in the air. These performances are very interesting, and we had the pleasure of many this past fortnight.

Then at 10.5 a.m. Two more seaplanes rose up and went in over land. The firing around us was still very heavy, but had eased a little since 8 a.m. The rifle and maxim fire on land was still raging, and we could see our boys advancing over the ridge of Gaba Tepe. The Turkish gun fire was now falling very thick over our landing point, and our boys were catching it pretty bad. Many casualties were reported, boatload after boatload passed us on their way to the Hospital ship. We gave them all a cheer as they passed, and even the sailors on the Queen in front of us cheered them, those that were not in the gun turrets. Some of the wounded who could sit up cheered, and remarks were passed: "They don't like the bayonet." "They don't half run." "Hurrah, are we downhearted." One fellow waved his bandaged arm, and all seemed so cheery, it gave all re-

newed courage. But they were cut up terrible. At 1 p.m. we attempted to get in closer again, which we did, going in front of the Queen, barely half a mile off the shore. Here we lay till 2.45 p.m. in peace, from gun fire, I mean, and then they started again, having got our range. They poured them in, it was hell for a while. One shell fell over the bow missing by a few feet. The spray she threw up drenched some fellows standing in the bows. Another missed our starboard by 20 feet, and following this another on the port side by a few feet. The Queen signalled us to back out, which we did with difficulty, just getting clear when some dozen shells fell where we had laid. The Queen and Bacchante opened a full broadside at their position, firing over our head. I tell you it was hell on earth for a bit. Five stray bullets got aboard with three narrow squeaks, one hit the captain's cabin door, another went through a chap's tunic and hit a ventilator against which I was standing, and another went through the chief engineer's porthole. At 3.10 p.m. an ammunition ship attempted to get to land, and was well peppered with shrapnel, but she dodged in safely. Then two destroyers rushed in under cover of the hill, with troops aboard.

All this time the warships were bombarding the top of Gaba Tepe, their shells doing terrible damage. Tons of earth were blown high into the sky with the burst of every shell. My word it was a fine sight. We were so interested in this display we took little notice of how the shells were falling our way. One trawler got in near shore and a shell hit her in the stern, making her useless. As the afternoon wore on the din and roar increased, and as the sun set behind us it threw such a good light on the hill. It was a sight thousands would have liked to have seen. Our troops were being heavily shelled and were in a bad way. But reinforcements were being hurried up to them. It was touch and go all Sunday night, but our boys held out, and Monday night saw them reinforced. At 6.15 p.m. all transports were ordered to retire to Imbros Island; there we would be safe till next morning. As we anchored near Imbros, eight miles away, and the night came on, the firing did not cease, but we were pleased to ease our eardrums a little for the roar was distant now. It was a glorious night and I stayed up well into the night watching the firing. From here we could see Cape Helles and Gaba Tepe; the firing at both places being very heavy. Just before midnight I rolled into my blanket and was soon fast asleep. So our first day with a

good taste of war ended, we being lucky to be able to rest for our comrades on shore were having a bad time. Morning came and the firing had quietened somewhat; but at intervals it broke out heavily, and so it has been for the past fortnight. Every day we have laid sometimes close into shore and sometimes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles out. I have it in my diary, but will tell you the chief things. On Monday afternoon at 5 p.m., 13 more transports arrived with troops, a naval brigade, and some thousands of Indians; but most of them were sent back to Cape Helles to help the British, who had also been cut up terribly in the face of the enemy's guns and forts. Our Colonel Rosenthal landed the 8th Brigade, only two guns, and got quickly into action. At 8 p.m. the Lizzie opened out near us over Gaba Tepe. Talk about a bang, she does go, and the whizz of her one-ton presents is terrific, and then the boom of the burst a minute or two after can be heard doing its work. On Tuesday morning the Turks opened fire with more guns, evidently brought up from the rear, and poured a terrible rain of shells all around the ships. Our landing stage on shore and the base just under cover of the hill came in for some heavy shelling. It is here such a lot have been wounded. Tuesday afternoon we were ordered to get in as near as possible to launch two more rafts. At 2.30 p.m. we got in near the Queen and commenced to put the rafts overboard. We had just got one over when the enemy opened fire on us with large howitzers—10in. shells. They had an observation station on land, which we have since blown up. Eight of these prize packets fell around us but not one hit. We had to pull out for things were getting too hot. They are very poor gunners. The Lizzy came up from Cape Helles and with three of her pills silenced them. Once you have experienced these large shells coming you don't care for two helpings. Everybody aboard termed it a great joke; one could not help laughing to see everyone duck as they came over. It seems to be natural, and the right thing to do. Tuesday evening 39 wounded were brought aboard our ship, as all the hospital ships were full. I dare not say too much of these; but it was dreadful. Some were terribly injured, others only slightly; but to look on them as they had been brought straight from the fighting told a tale. It has been a hard struggle and terrific; but they all bore their wounds well. I will not dilate on this any more; but this was my first sight of wounded. It is quite a common one now. The more one sees the more it brings home to one the horrors of warfare, and stirs one's blood to fever heat.

Next day, Wednesday, eight wounded Indians were brought on. They were such fine big fellows, and all belonged to an Indian Mule Mountain Battery, and had done some wonderful work. On Wednesday night things had progressed so well that quite a town of lights had grown up on the beach. Our boys in their dug-outs on the cliffs and side of the hills were enjoying a rest after their hard task, and had been relieved by reinforcements. On Thursday, 29th April, two floating mines were picked up near a transport opposite us. The Turks have been putting these in around a point, but got caught and paid the penalty.

My, we have seen some fine shooting here. On a point away to the left of Gaba Tepe the Majestic spotted a party trying to get to the shore with mines or something, and she let two shots go and they were no more. It was lovely shooting, right on the spot every time. At 5 p.m. after the Lizzie had been doing a bit of firing a huge cloud of dense black smoke rose into the air away inland. This was a portion of the town of Maidos; one of the Lizzie's shells having set fire to a magazine. At night the fire lit up the whole country and it continued to burn for three days, sending up clouds of black smoke all the time.

On Saturday some of our boys captured a wireless station, and took some prisoners. They caught the sentry asleep. (What oh!) One day we pulled in close and tied up alongside a store ship. We had no sooner got to work than those blessed coal boxes started to come over. It began to get a bit warm and the risk was too great, so all transports moved out a bit. As we were doing so a rain of shells came over and for once after over a week one of them got home, striking a collier just aft of her funnel, but did not do much damage, only injuring two of her crew. For about three minutes we could not see her for dense black smoke and thought she was a goner. The destroyers all rushed over to her, but after a while we saw her propeller commence to move and knew she was alright. It was an anxious few minutes. Hardly had this one hit than two more fell just short of her stern. This is the only hit amongst the transports here, and I think we are very lucky, for the amount of shelling we have had. We have had three visits from aeroplanes. The first one flew up too high and our guns could not reach him. Every visit has been at sunset. The last two visits he dropped bombs, but the aim was bad and they missed, just short of the Atlantia.

But they burst with a terrible bang. He then turned off and flew back. The last time his objective was the Calboa, and it was an exciting go and a near one, but the guns soon scared him off. He would not care to come down too low. Our sea-planes are up continually every day and are quite a common sight now. Their value is unlimited. They do such fine work.

I expect ere this you have a list of the casualties. They are very heavy. The Colonel has been wounded in four places. My word he was a good fellow and everyone has a good word for him. He did such wonderful work with the guns. Working and digging along with the boys, sharing everything with them. Then Lieut. Clowes, our staff officer, was wounded, and we do not know what has happened to the Adjutant. The 8th and 9th battery majors are both wounded. Captain Leslie, of the 7th battery was killed with a whole shell and died game and brave. I was his trumpeter at my first camp at Tambourine. He was a good fellow and well liked by all the boys. Sergt. Major Light, our Sergeant Major, is reported killed. He broke me in you know to my drills and was a real good sport. There are many other casualties with our crowd; it would take too long to mention. The 9th Queensland Infantry suffered terribly, all their officers except one being killed or wounded within the first five days.

It is raining hard now and the weather has changed, but we must not grumble, it has been glorious up till now and could not have been better for such a business. We are now well on our way back to Alexandria. Having left the scene of operations at 4 a.m. this morning, amid a heavy roar of guns, all of which has died away, and it really is nice to have quietness once again. But our hopes (all those who have to look after horses), as to landing, have been put off for a while. We are going back to exchange our horses for mules; that is as far as we know. Horses are useless up there. The country is treacherous and would kill a horse in two days. They are making roads, &c., as they go but it is so hilly and rocky that mules are the only hope. They have some 2000 more there now. What a lot we shall be, all donkey boys. A wounded chap was telling me of the donkeys when they are picketed in lines as is the rule with horses. It made him laugh nearly to bursting to see the lines when a shell came over. All

they did was to raise and drop their ears all together as if they were being drilled, and you know how long their ears are. All the boats that have horses aboard are travelling with us—quite a crowd. It seems like old times coming over from Australia. I wish it was the other way round. But not yet awhile. I am anxious to get ashore to do my bit, although I suppose we are doing our share here. I expect it will be jolly hot in Egypt at this time of the year; but we do not expect to be there long. It just depends how the mules get on. I mean, how we get on with them. Talk about fun, it will be that. We had 30 Jews from Palestine, belonging to the Mule Transport, and they could not manage their mules though they had been used to them all their lives. How shall we get on? It will be a good circus show, especially if we have to break them in for riding. Can't you imagine us at riding drill?



JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY
— BRISBANE —

